

THE AGED SAINT IN LIFE AND DEATH.

15
A

S E R M O N,

Occasioned by the DEATH of

MR. MATTHEW MILLER,

Who departed this Life JULY the 11th, 1788;

Preached at ROSS, JULY 20,

By WILLIAM MILLER.

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TO
THE CHURCH OF
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS AT ROSS,
HEREFORDSHIRE,
THE AUTHOR
INSCRIBES THE FOLLOWING
PLAIN DISCOURSE,
AS A MEMORIAL OF A
DEAR DEPARTED FATHER,
A MEMBER OF THEIR SOCIETY,
AND
AS A FURTHER TESTIMONY OF
CORDIAL AFFECTION FOR THE LIVING.

TO THE CHURCH OF
PROTESTANT DISSENT AT BOSTON
HEREFORWARD

THE AUTHOR
INCORPORATES THE FOLLOWING



AS A MEMORIAL OF A
DEAR DEPARTED FATHER
A MEMBER OF THEIR SOCIETY
AND

AS A FURTHER TESTIMONY OF
CORDIAL AFFECTION FOR THE LIVING

A

S E R M O N, &c.

The Memory of the Just, Solomon observes, is blessed. An expositor * remarks on this passage, " Good men are and ought to be well spoken of: it is part of the duty of survivors." As a memorial of the dear Deceased, and with a view to the improvement of his death for the benefit of the living, I enter upon the necessary but to nature painful service of this evening. Let me entreat your prayers who hear me, that I may be assisted through it; and that what may be said on the blessedness of the faint in life and death, may under the divine influence leave suitable and lasting impressions on all our minds. The passage to which I would call your attention on this solemn occasion, is recorded in the book of Job,

C H A P. V. verse 26.

*Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a
shock of corn cometh in, in his season.*

O U R dear departed relative and friend,
like † Morason mentioned in the Acts of
the

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* Mr. Henry.

† read Mnason

the Apostles, was the old man, and the old disciple together. Fourscore years and three he was a sojourner on this earth; and many of these he spent as a pilgrim, travelling towards the heavenly country with his heart and face thitherwards. In him therefore, the words of Eliphaz to Job were literally verified; for after a long life on earth, he came to his grave in a full age, like as a flock of corn cometh in, in his season.

Many are the blessings which within the compass of a few verses Eliphaz declares to belong to the upright. He is not exempted from afflictions any more than others; yet instructed and enabled to demean himself properly under them, he is pronounced happy, as one whom the Lord correcteth, ver. 17. Afflictions, when sanctified, are amongst the greatest blessings; and in due time, when the end of them is answered, they are removed with as much mercy, as they were sent. This gives occasion to the language of the 18th verse. He maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole. The saint may be tried, but can never be destroyed by afflictions. — Do his troubles multiply, and surrounding dangers threaten? The Lord makes him the object of his care, and provides a way of escape. Eliphaz accordingly proceeds in the following verses, saying,

saying, He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine, he shall redeem thee from death; and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh; neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be at peace, and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin. Such is the hedge of protection which Providence raises about the good man. While the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, his eyes run to and fro in the earth to shew himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him. (a) Upon this ground the apostle Peter asks, Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? (b) But not only is the righteous marked out as the blessed of the Lord, but his offspring with him. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great or much, and thy off-spring as the grass of the earth, ver. 25. The blessing mentioned in the text, finishes and completes the detail. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season.

(a) 2 Chron. xvi. 9. (b) 1 Pet. iii. 13.

son. Eliphaz assures Job who was now in the depth of adversity, that if he was really a child of God, and behaved himself as such under his corrections, his present trials however grievous, should at length have a happy issue. Job lived to see all that Eliphaz foretold, come to pass. The Lord blessed his latter end more than his beginning, and the last words of his history most strikingly shew the accomplishment of the whole even in his death. So Job died, being old and full of days. (c) Other saints besides Job, can add their testimony to the divine faithfulness in like manner: of this number was our departed friend, in reference to whom it would be easy for a son to point out, how goodness and mercy followed him all his days. — At present I shall confine myself chiefly to the consideration in the words of my text, viz. that of his coming to his grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season.

Two observations offer themselves from the words.

I. Long life enjoyed by some saints, is a privilege.

II. Death at a full or good old age is a privilege also.

I shall attempt to shew in what respects, or on what accounts, both these observations are true; and

(c) Job xlii. 17.

and then conclude with an improvement of the subject and the bereaving providence.

Observ. I. Long life enjoyed by some saints is a privilege.

Though it has not been the lot of saints in general to live long on the earth, yet there are instances upon record and memory, of several to whom it has been allowed. None, however, have been suffered to remain here always; saints as little desire as expect it; for under the imperfections and trials attendant on this state, what is there to incline them to an everlasting residence here? Life, was it endless on earth, would cease to be a mercy. Job, sensible of this truth, and oppressed beneath a load of sorrows, manifests the strongest aversion to it. I loath it, I would not live always. (d) And what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? (e) Where saints have been raised up like Hezekiah after being threatened with an early or premature dissolution, they have been only respited; the execution of the sentence is put off to a future period in such cases; but there is no entire discharge from it. Mankind being included under the sentence, "It is appointed unto all men once to die;" (f) and so the grave the house intended for all living, the Methuselah for age, the oldest believer must at length return to it. But it is a privilege to attain to a full age ere a change
by

(d) Job vii, 16. (e) Psa. lxxxix. 48. (f) Heb. ix. 27.

by death takes place. To make this appear, the following considerations will be sufficient.

1. Death comes most naturally at a full age. Like a taper which is lighted up, and unless extinguished will remain burning till the whole is consumed ; the body if not destroyed, will survive till its strength is naturally exhausted, and it gradually sinks into the dust. Man is a creature formed to continue a number of years on earth : life in the early ages of the world consisted of hundreds, but is now reduced to narrower bounds. Nature, after a round of seventy years, droops and tends to the grave. (g) Before this period the approach of death is untimely, whether the assaults of sickness or violence make way for it in infancy, youth, or manhood ; because life has not reached its appointed boundary ; and the constitution according to the order of nature, might hold out longer. Death, in this case, extinguishes the candle of light before it is burnt out, but at a full age life wastes of itself and a dissolution ensues, as a candle expiring in its socket. Hezekiah complains on this account, I said, in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave : I am deprived of the residue of my years. (h)—Length of days, therefore, is a privilege, as death comes most naturally at a full age.

2. Long life to the Christian is a privilege, as
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(g) Psa. xc. 10.

(h) Isaiah xxxviii. 10.

it is the accomplishment of a promise, and a token of the divine favor. The apostle Paul observes, godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come.

(*i*) It manifestly has it from the nature of the promise annexed to the fifth commandment, Honour thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth. (*k*) Solomon enjoins conformity to the law in general upon his son by the same consideration. My son, (says he,) forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my commandments: for length of days, long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. (*l*) Life is found in the inventory of privileges belonging to one who is Christ's. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, all are your's. (*m*) True it is, many of the people of God are called off early, yet he is faithful notwithstanding, who hath promised. The Lord may accomplish his promise in more ways than one; and whom he thinks proper, honour with an earlier admission to heaven by denying them a longer residence on earth. But this forbids not our considering length of days below as a privilege, when it is enjoyed as a matter of promise, and so, a token of the divine favour. It is one of those blessings by the want of which the wicked in scripture are distinguished from

(*i*) 1 Tim. iv. 8. (*k*) Ephes. vi. 2, 3. (*l*) Prov. iii. 1, 2.
(*m*) 1 Cor. iii. 22.

from the godly : they are said to live but half their days. (n) A very short period is often the natural consequence of their sin, always the just desert of it, and awful effect of the divine displeasure against them for it. How many warnings of this nature are given us in the sacred writings ; and within a very few years what alarming spectacles have appeared amongst us of this neighbourhood ! How applicable to the untimely death of one and another, the words of the psalmist, I have seen the wicked spreading himself, like a green bay tree, yet he passed away, and lo, he was not ; yea I sought him, but he could not be found. (o) And is not the destroying angel still on his way ? Surely, the voice of the Lord crieth unto the inhabitants of this place, saying, The transgressors shall be destroyed together : the end of the wicked shall be cut off. (p) The wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it. (q) Divine forbearance, indeed, often spares the rebel, till he becomes old in sin and age too ; but alas ! what is a long life to such, where the space given for repentance is abused by unbelief and impenitency ? It serves only to increase and aggravate the guilt and misery of the presumptuous wretch at last ; he does but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment

(n) Psa. lv. 23. (o) Psa. xxxvii. 36. (p) Psa. xxxvii. 38.

(q) Prov. ii. 22.

judgment of God. (r) How different are our aged Simeons and waiting Jacobs! Are they not visible monuments of the divine regard, bearing this inscription upon them, The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. (s) Long life is a privilege as it is a fulfilment of a promise, and so a token of the divine favour.

3. Long life is a privilege as it affords him more opportunities of serving and glorifying God. This is the desire and design of every saint. Enlightened to see the beauties of holiness, having the love of Christ shed abroad in his heart, and constrained thereby, the time past of his life more than suffices him to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. He would now no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. (t) Making the will of God as revealed in the word his rule, and walking according to it, God is glorified. But the service of the saints on earth ends with their lives, and consequently, when these trees of righteousness are removed by death, the fruit which they bore, and by which their heavenly father was so much honoured, fails. — On this account the church and world sustain a considerable loss by their death. While the glory of their master is the chief aim of their lives, the interest of the church and world is inseparably connected with it.

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(r) Rom. ii. 5. (s) Prov. ii. 21. (t) 1 Pet. iv. 2, 3.

The former, as a sacred edifice is deprived of its beautiful stones; the latter of its salt. The world no longer enjoys their holy example, faithful admonitions and earnest prayers. Fellow saints no more commune with them, and share the advantages of their excellent company and edifying walk and conversation. In short, they cease to shine as lights in the world. (u) Seeing, then, that after death they rest from their labours, it is very desirable the saints should live long; because the longer the day of life is, the greater the opportunities for performing service. Till they bid a final adieu to this state, their work in some shape is not over; but God continues to receive a tribute of glory from them to the last. They shall flourish (says the psalmist) in the courts of the Lord. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. (w) The service they wish to do for their Master, and thereby advance his glory, and the opportunity afforded them for it on earth, are the principal reasons why the saints set such a value upon and manifest such an attachment to life. The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: the living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day. (x) From his capacity for, and opportunity of serving God by a longer life, sick Hezekiah thus pleads for his recovery. The psalmist urges the same

(u) Phil. ii. 15. (w) Psa. xcii. 13, 14. (x) Isaiah xxxviii. 18.

same plea, What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? (y) So strong is the desire of the saints to serve and glorify God. It is their first and highest, their dearest and most delightful end: life is accounted by them as unworthy of the name, but as for them to live is Christ; and afflictive as the present state is, they are willing to abide in it for the purpose of accomplishing what they have so much at heart; in point of present sufferings, and a persuasion of future glory, what strong inducements had blessed Paul to desire his departure hence; but we find him in a strait. Overcome by a desire to be serviceable to the church and his Master, he is reconciled to a longer absence from heaven, and a further scene of trial and suffering on earth. — Long life, therefore, to the saints is a privilege, as it affords them more opportunities of serving and glorifying God.

4. Long life appears a privilege as it is favorable to the growth of the saints in grace, and fitness for glory. Heaven, the everlasting abode of the saints, is a state of holiness and happiness. While they have their title to it as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, an habitual and actual fitness for it is necessary. Their present
state

state on earth, therefore, is designed to be preparatory for that above. The church in this world is a nursery of the trees of righteousness, till they are transplanted by death into a better soil. Here they are first formed and planted ; here they grow under those means which are appointed and blessed for that purpose. But as in nature, so in grace, growth is gradual. The saints shoot not up all at once, but time and means are requisite for their improvement. The evident difference between the old disciple in point of knowledge, judgment, steadiness, and spirituality, above one of a shorter standing in the divine life, sufficiently bespeaks the necessity and advantage of an early acquaintance with the things of God. A spiritual growth may indeed receive temporary checks, and the Christian be subject to occasional decays, but if we take the whole of his life together, he will appear in the main to be advancing to a state of maturity. Ordinances, duties and providences, promote under the divine blessing, the good work of grace in the soul. After a course of time he acquires those measures of holiness which constitute ripeness. — This view of life affords the Christian another reason for considering length of days a privilege.

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I now proceed to confider the

II. Obfervation. That death to the faint at a full age is a privilege alfo. It is fo, becaufe he is then taken in, like as a flock of corn cometh in, in his feafon.

He is thus taken in,

1. In refpect of his body. "The graves are ready for me" was the language of Job ; (z) but the aged Chriftian may proceed further, and with truth declare, "My flefh is ready for the grave." Age brings with it its infirmities. How juftly and ftrikingly does Solomon describe them when he fays, The keepers of the houfe tremble, the ftiong men bow themfelves, and thofe that look out at the windows are darkened. (a) Weaknefs of the limbs, decay of teeth and eye-fight, attend its firft approach, and are followed by others. Infirmities increafing difable the body for the fervice of the foul, both as to the duties of religion, and the ordinary concerns and enjoyments of life. Good old Barzillai declined accepting David's invitation of his company to Jerufalem on that account. I am this day (fays he) fourfcore years old ; and can I difcern between good and evil ? Can thy fervant tafte what I eat or what I drink ? Can I hear any more the voice of finging-men and finging-women ? (b) Old people love folitude, and their houfes at length become

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(z) Job xvii, 1. (a) Ecclef, xii, 1, 2. (b) 2 Sam. xix. 35.

a sort of graves above ground : their doors are, accordingly, said to be shut in the streets. (c) However the aged saint would be active for God as usual, and in respect of grace, might be more apt for every good word and work, yet the weak frame is an unsurmountable obstacle. Life now becomes a burden ; numerous infirmities indicate a speedy removal. In such a situation, what place is more fit for the decaying body than the grave ? He comes to it as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season. Death and the grave are both awful and forbidding to nature. To the sinner they are attended with dreadful terrors ; but to the saint they assume a different aspect. The aged saint hath various considerations to reconcile him to both. He can no longer enjoy himself as he was wont to do : the grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails. (d) His activity and usefulness are now over : having performed his work he returns to the dust as the labourer from his business. The grave at the evening of life becomes his bed of rest, and a place of refuge from all the cares, troubles, and infirmities of the present state. Here the wicked cease from troubling, here the weary are at rest. (e) In solitude, silence, and darkness, the body lies here, undisturbed by complaints, and far removed from all connections with and concerns about

(c) Eccles. xii. 4. (d) Eccles. xii. 5. (e) Job iii. 17.

about a busy world. The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. (*f*) — But what most of all reconciles the Christian to the grave is the gospel. This informs him the King of Saints once lay in it; that he hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. (*g*) Death, therefore, like a sleep, is but temporary, and the grave a bed, where the body remains till the glorious morning of the resurrection. It shall then awake at the shout of the archangel's trumpet. — Christ is risen and become himself the first fruits of those who sleep. (*h*) As certainly as the harvest succeeds the first fruits, shall the general resurrection of the members follow the personal one of their head. Well then may they adopt the language of triumph, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (*h*) While we commit the dust of the saints to the grave, as the husbandman doth his seed to the ground, let us look forward to the

B 2

harvest

(*f*) Job vii. 8, 9, 10. (*g*) 2 Tim. i. 10.(*h*) 1 Cor. xv. 20, — 55, 56, 57.

harvest at the end of the world. Then, that which is sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory; that which is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; that which is sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body. (i) O glorious issue to the confinement and dishonours of the mouldering flesh! At its future release, it shall come forth out of the grave as gold out of the fire seven times purified. On such a view of the house appointed for all living, how is its appearance changed, and its horror done away to the Christian! Instead of retreating from it, the aged saint may cheerfully commit his lifeless remains to its bosom under the persuasion, that his Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth: and though after his skin, worms destroy his body, yet that in his flesh he shall see God. (k)

2. He is taken in as a flock of corn in his season, in respect of his soul. When then dust returns to the dust as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it. (l) — Corn is a scripture metaphor, by which the Christian is frequently set forth. They shall revive as the corn. (m) And it is a well adapted representation throughout — as the corn is not quickened except it die, so saints die unto sin in order to live unto God: — as
the

(i) 1 Cor. xv. 42, &c. (k) Job xix. 25, 26.

(l) Eccles. xii. 7. (m) Hos. xiv. 7.

the blade, the ear, and the full corn, are observable in the growth of grain; so grace admits of degrees. When grace is advanced to the third degree in the saint, he is ripe, and then the great husbandman putteth in his sickle because the harvest is come. (n) Both soul and body shew the aged saint is not to remain long in this world. What a holy indifference to the present state does he discover! What a daily believing expectation of his great change! What a patient resignation to the divine will! What a humble faith in our dear Lord and Redeemer! Surely such appearances intimate growth and maturity; and they were all evident in our dear departed relative and friend. At this juncture, he was taken in, like a shock of corn cometh in, in his season. After a separation from the wicked, who are as chaff, and from the remains of sin, which are intermixed with grace, as chaff with wheat in the soul of the believer; he is lodged in heaven as precious grain in the garner. O blessed state to which he is exalted above! Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them who love him. (o) There is the joy of harvest also upon the occasion. The angels, who rejoiced in the conversion of the saint, now as much exult in his glori-

B 3

fication.

(x) Mark iv. 29.

(o) 1 Cor. ii. 9.

fication. Saints already there, are happy in every addition to the blessed assembly, and join in hearty congratulations of the lately arrived stranger to those glorious mansions. In short, then is accomplished what is written, The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (*p*)

All that remains is the improvement of the subject, and providence which gave occasion to it.

1. It is natural to remark the care and goodness of a covenant God and Redeemer to his people, even to the last. The sight of an aged saint brings to remembrance those promises, Even to your old age, I am he, and to hoary hairs will I carry you. (*q*) And again, The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing: to shew that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. (*r*) The Christian is equally in jeopardy of his natural life as others. What numerous escapes must the aged saint have enjoyed from dangers
seen

(*p*) Isaiah xxxv. 10. (*q*) Isaiah xlv. 4. (*r*) Psa. xcii. 12, &c.

seen and unseen during so long a pilgrimage! But it is the peculiar privilege of him, who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Because he hath made the Lord his habitation, there shall no evil befall him, neither shall any plague come near his dwelling. With long life will he satisfy him, and shew him his salvation. (s) The same care watches over him, as a Christian. There are as many, if not more dangers attending the spiritual life. The corruptions of the heart, the snares of the world, and temptations of satan, make the road to heaven difficult. Unless God was the saint's guide and protector, he must fall at his first onset, not only foully but finally; but the steps of the good man are ordered by the Lord: Though he fall he shall not utterly be cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. (t) The saints are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. (u) Thus the aged saint is a convincing proof of the unchangeableness of God's love to his people, the merit of the blood of Christ, the efficacy of his grace, his faithfulness to his promises, and the agency of his providence, in behalf of the upright. If we are of the number of the Lord's people, we may be assured, goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives. —

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Under

(s) Psa. xci. 1. 9. 10. 16. (t) Psa. xxxvii. 23. (u) 1 Pet. i. 5.

Under all difficulties we may boldly say, The Lord is our helper ; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (w)

2. Under the death of our aged relative and friend, let us labour to improve it, by copying his example in life, as far as worthy of imitation ; and to press forward to that state, where through grace, we hope, he is. What was worthy and imitable in the dead whilst alive is carefully to be remembered by the survivors, for their own advantage. For the use of such, allow me to observe the following particulars concerning my father. His youthful days were devoted to God, and his more advanced life reaped the advantage of it. Under the decays of age, he was heard to say, " Oh ! make much of youth and health."—Doubtless, his advice would be similar still, was he permitted to address the youth of this congregation. In the words of Solomon it would run, Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. (x) Through the aids of divine grace, he was enabled to persevere till the last ; and affords an encouraging example to aged and younger Christians, to seek and rely on the same supports, and vigorously to pursue the course they have begun.

In

(w) Heb. xiii, 5, 6. (x) Eccles. xii. 1.

In addition to these things in general, I cannot forbear mentioning some particulars, in which he was certainly very deserving of our notice. — He possessed undaunted courage and resolution in his profession of Christ, being a stranger to shame and fear when called upon to maintain his great master's cause. He inherited, in this respect, the spirit of his ancestors ; one of whom was slain for the sake of the Gospel ; and another, as near a relation as his own father, was imprisoned on the same account. He was a particular observer of Divine Providence, a regular attendant upon public worship, and a strict and conscientious keeper of the sabbath. As a parent, his children are witnesses to the care and pains he took, early to instil the knowledge of divine things into their minds : catechising to this end was an exercise he attended to for years, almost as constant as the sabbath returned. God had an altar erected in his family every morning and evening. He was a Gaius for hospitality. As a church member, he was vigilant and active. From a regard to liberty of conscience, the honour of Christ as king in Zion, and in his judgment to the most scriptural mode of worship, he professed himself a Protestant Dissenter. At the same time, he was not one who confined religion to a party, and had a real regard for the godly of all denominations. — He is gone beyond the reach of
censure,

censure, or the danger of applause ; whatever is said by the living is entirely indifferent to him : it proceeds, therefore, from a design not to embalm the dead, but to profit the living, that the above account is given. Be ye followers of him, so far as he was of Christ.

3. When the Christian is spared to a full age and then dies, there is cause for gratitude and resignation among survivors. These may well be thankful they enjoyed him so long ; that he was spared to them, whilst he could be active and useful. Such circumstances appear in the death of our dear departed friend, and call for grateful acknowledgments both from his family and the church to which he was related. By his living to a good old age, we enjoyed the best of his days and strength. As to his family ; had he been removed years ago, how much more afflictive would this dispensation have been to the surviving partner of his life, left encumbered with a rising family and other large concerns. Instead therefore of repining that he was taken away at last, there appears abundant reason to bless God we lost him no sooner. The recollection of his coming to his grave, like as a flock of corn cometh in, in his season, is a most reconciling thought.—He could no longer have been useful ; life to him, had it been prolonged, would have been a growing burden ; and survivors are not called to
sorrow

forrow as those who are without hope. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord. (y)

4. And lastly. The end of the righteous teaches us the reality, excellency, and importance of religion. Say ye to the righteous, (is Jehovah's commiffion) it shall be well with him. (z) The psalmist calls upon us to mark the perfect man, and behold the upright : for the end of that man is peace. (a) It was so with the deceased. The close of his life resembled a calm summer's evening. That good companion, Hope, attended him to the last. A day or two before his death, he was heard to say, " It will all do very well." Christ alone was the foundation he built upon. — The mention of his name seemed as ointment poured forth to his soul. He lost sight of natural infirmities, in that one complaint, " That he wanted to find Christ yet more precious." Thus he died in the Lord. Surely then there must be a reality, excellency, and importance in religion peculiar to itself. It is religion only, as it consists in a vital union to Christ by faith, a firm belief in the great truths of the gospel, and a walk and conversation agreeable to them, which can prove a solid support in the trying and interesting hour of death. The sinner, sensible of the advantage the Christian has above himself at this period,

(y) Job i, 21.

(z) Isaiah iii, 10.

(a) Psa. xxxvii. 37.

period, envies his situation, and adopts the wish of Balaam, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. (b) Vain wish ! whilst a stranger to the Christian character. — God has rendered it impossible, but by retracting his awful denunciation to the contrary, There is no peace to the wicked. (c) Death-beds show, he neither hath nor will reverse it. What remorse of conscience, what a tormenting dread of eternity often fills and racks the sinner, as he approaches to the eternal world ! Yet all is trifling, compared with what follows on the departure of the soul. Ah, sinners ! if this be the end of a life of sin, so different from that of the Christian, which acts the wisest part ? How will your folly and madness appear at last in the love and practice of evil, the wages of which is death ? Hath religion nothing to countenance and recommend it, when it supports the mind, fills it with joy unspeakable and full of glory, at a time when all things else fail ? Oh ! that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end ! Consider ere it is too late. Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation. (d) Put not off these great concerns to an uncertain hereafter. Every day affords us fresh proof of our mortality. Souls, those deathless things, are of inconceivable worth.

Heaven

(b) Numb. xxiii, 10. (c) Isaiah lvii, 21. (d) 2 Cor. vi, 2,

Heaven and hell are depending. Is there not then every call upon you, sinners, to attend to the things that belong to your everlasting peace, before they are hid from your eyes? Happy should I be, if this feeble improvement of the death of a saint should be the means of awakening you to a concern about salvation. — May the spirit of God make it effectual to this end!

To you, whose minds have been in a measure enlightened to see a reality, excellency, and importance in divine things, the gospel contains the tidings of a great and gracious Saviour. It speaks for your encouragement, in the language of extensive invitation, Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely. (*e*)

To conclude with a word to you, my dear Christian friends, who are advancing in your Christian course; let the happy end of the saint be considered as a call, and most encouraging motive, to your perseverance in it. The rest that remaineth will make ample amends for all the difficulties, trials, and labours of the road. — Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labours shall not be in vain in the Lord. (*f*)

(*e*) Rev. xxii. 17.

(*f*) 1 Cor. xv. 58.

A HYMN on the Occasion.

I.

BEHOLD the aged faint in death,
How peaceful is his end !
The dying flesh, and fault'ring breath,
Conceal a happy mind.

II.

When nature with its comforts fail,
Faith still exerts its power ;
Strongly supports the immortal soul,
When sense can help no more.

III.

Could we but once withdraw the veil,
What wond'rous scenes would rise !
The great Redeemer aiding still,
And angels from the skies !

IV.

The loving Saviour comes to meet
The soul upon the road,
And heav'nly hosts in order wait,
To bear it up to God.

V.

V.

Not thrones of state where monarchs reign
Display such pomp and pow'r,
As round the saint by faith are seen,
At his departing hour.

VI.

O for a strong enliv'ning faith
To take the heav'nly view :
Then should we triumph in his death,
And long to follow too.



1838

Not far from the shore where
The sea is deep and low
As when the tide is in
At his departing hour

VI

O for a strong enduring faith
To see the best of views
Then should we in his death
And long to good bye



